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The concept of a distinct lower class or culture is often detrimental to the study and counseling of lower-class families. Confusion about the meaning of class and culture is dangerous within the scientific disciplines and in popular thinking. By classifying broadly, the wide ranges of behavior within certain groups or individuals are overlooked or underestimated. Preoccupations with culture and class divert consideration from actual forces affecting these groups.

Research shows that low-income parents tend to show greater conformity to middle-class standards in what they say they want than in their actual behavior. Behavior of the bulk of poor families appears to be pragmatic adjustment to external and internal stresses and deprivations, experienced in the quest for essentially common values.

Focus on effort should be on background conditions and on precipitants of deviant behavior rather than on presumably different class or cultural values. The planner and practitioner should act in terms of individuals, families, and groups within the class, rather than in terms of the class itself.

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Lewis

CULTURE, CLASS AND THE BEHAVIOR OF LOW INCOME FAMILIES*

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This paper has three purposes: first, to share some concerns about some of the ways in which the terms culture and class are used to describe and explain behavior, particularly that of the low income segment of the urban population; second, to present preliminary findings from a current study of low income families in the District of Columbia[1] that in part stimulated, and now accent, these concerns; and third, to suggest some implications of these for welfare planning and practice.

While trying to sort out some thoughts about the conference theme, Lower Class Culture, I was diverted by the list of papers presented at the spring meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology; and by a two-year old newspaper clipping.

When I read the list of 24 papers offered at the Society for Applied Anthropology meeting, I was fully prepared for the fact that the term culture, or some derivative of it, appeared in the titles of one-third of the papers. I was not quite prepared, however, for the assortment of things to which the term was applied:

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Bennett O. Stalvey

"Marriage of Two Cultures -- Social Science and Medicine"

"The Job: Stress and Resource of Americans at Work in a Third Culture"

"The 'Two Subcultures' of the Peace Corps: Staff and Volunteer"

"Convict Culture and the Behavior of Prisoners"

The reference to social science and medicine as two cultures stimulated the thought that much of the current tendency to use the term culture so freely reflects a too rapid diffusion of an inside term (a social science culture trait?) that once had relatively narrow meaning and use. Kluckhohn's comments about diffusion are not amiss, in this context:

> ...diffusion may be compared to a forest fire: things go where the wind blows and where impermeable barriers do not exist. Sometimes the high wind of fashion will lift sparks far over intervening areas. Sometimes the sparks smolder for a long time before they burst into flame. People have to be 'ready' for new things.[2]

Whatever the reasons for this "readiness," both inside and outside the trade, the increased and more versatile use of the term has not yet resulted in a comparable increase in validated knowledge of such key current problems as poverty, dependency, delinquency, and mental health.

Another extension of the use of culture is seen in an allusion to "the culture of the uninvolved" in the newspaper clipping mentioned earlier:

> Too much stimulation from communications media and too much social mobility may be creating in America a class of well-informed people who couldn't care less.
>
> This 'culture of the uninvolved' is described... in an American Medical Association publication.
>
> ...the uninvolved American has shallow, transitory object relations and this used to be considered a character weakness. This disorder is found in people exposed to overwhelming experiences, like former inmates of concentration camps.[3]

These bits of symptomatology are familiar. They correspond to traits featured in some of the conventional mappings of lower class behavior, and they could well be used to characterize aspects of the behavior of some of the low income parents in our study.

While thinking about the "culture of the uninvolved," I wondered if there might be any virtue in postulating four cultures -- the urbanely uninvolved, the urbanely involved, the unurbanely uninvolved, and the unurbanely involved -- and making a cross-class analysis.

The term culture is now widely applied to numerous dimensions and components of the behavior of aggregates, groups and persons. Like class, with which it is frequently used in combination -- and often interchangeably, it seems -- culture is sometimes used in an actuarial fashion to describe and predict the life chances of individuals, aggregates, and groups. At other times, it is used to describe and explain social and physical conditions. At still other times, it is used to describe and to explain the objective and subjective characteristics, explicit and implicit behavior, and individual and group character associated with these life chances and conditions. Careful distinctions are not always drawn among differing applications, and therefore different meanings, of the terms. Culture is confused with mobility expectations,

conditions, states of being, and personality -- or aspects of personality. Too frequently, they are described, if not defined, in terms of one another. That they are related would hardly be disputed; however, the precise nature of the relationships is another matter. The linkage of culture and class in itself makes for problems, inasmuch as "culture differences and social stratification vary independently. They can neither be reduced, nor can they be equated."[4] In a similar vein, David Riesman suggests, "cultural differences, no matter how forcefully they may strike the ear, the eye, or the nose, are not necessarily connected with character differences of equal significance."[5]

Some of the things frequently referred to as significant cultural or class differences are probably better seen as temporary gaucheries -- or perhaps gaffes -- in acting out valued aspects of the standard culture. Kroeber's comments about adolescent culture help to illuminate this point:

> Its quality is a special twist given to the standard culture; a conscious departure from some elements of it, or a sort of deliberately distorted reflection. Ordinarily there is no real revolt, no seeking a reform, but a basic conformity with the existing order, accentuated by an assertion of ... independence at points of no great moment. By the time full social maturity is entered, most of the twists are abandoned by each individual. The whole phenomenon may be compared to the slight wave or bulge of water that the bow of a moving ship keeps pushing just ahead of it.[6]

Further, what might be viewed by some as a part of lower class culture may be no more than somewhat tardy, no longer stylish -- but all-too-familiar -- conspicuous consumption:

> ... The working class has fallen heir to conspicuous consumption, which the leisure class is giving up. Aristocratic and Puritan upper strata have always disapproved of lower-class extravagance; Veblen has now furnished an additional reason for doing so, so that many of us object to Negro workers driving Cadillacs not so much because they should save their money but because they should spend it less gaudily. We are apt to disapprove of tenement television much as in Veblen's day we disapproved of tenement dirt and promiscuity ....[7]

Many of the formulations of lower class culture, as well as of the culture of poverty with which it is frequently confused, contain within them a number of intellectual assumptions and untested hypotheses. Unfortunately, these often beget generalizations that are not consonant with existing data. For such reasons alone, it is urgent that the versions of lower class culture and of the culture of poverty that have filtered into popular thinking and pedagogical planning and practice should be looked at very carefully.

One danger lies in the tendency to subsume under lower class culture a medley of traits without making distinctions among the kinds of traits and among levels of abstraction. A related danger comes from the failure to separate in the packaged traits essence from accident, the crucial from the trivial, and the persistent from the transitory.

The concern is not so much that mixed traits are combined into neat conceptual packages to guide the further investigation needed, but rather it is that in circulation and use, both inside and outside the trade, the abstraction -- lower class culture -- becomes concrete and is accepted without the indicated qualifications.

Walter Miller's formulation of lower class culture and Oscar Lewis' depiction of the culture of poverty are among the most influential and persuasive of recent statements. Each formulation carries some of the conceptual and practical dangers mentioned above, although each researcher stresses tentativeness and the need for much additional research.

Miller refers to his analysis as an "initial attempt to approach this cultural type.../It/ has evident limitations, but is a start, at least, in a direction which should be pursued further."[8]

> Some of the characteristics of this way of life...are the use of a 'lower class' grammatical and pronunciation system, drinking and social congregation patterns, prevalent use of body tatooing by males, characteristic patterns of marriage and child rearing, use of certain profane terms by females, etc.[9]

And he notes: "Further research is necessary to establish the most 'critical' and accurate behavioral indices of lower class status."[10]

Oscar Lewis says that the culture of poverty is not "synonymous with the working class.../It/ would apply only to those people who are at the very bottom of the socio-economic scale."[11] It is important to note, however, the content and the organization of his "provisional conceptual model of this culture based mainly upon...Mexican materials"[12] bears a striking resemblance to Miller's model of lower class culture.

> ...economic straits...include the constant struggle for survival, unemployment and underemployment, low wages...the absence of savings, a chronic shortage of cash...

> ... social and psychological characteristics include living in crowded quarters, a lack of privacy, gregariousness, a high incidence of alcoholism, frequent resort to violence ... free unions or consensual marriages, a high incidence of the abandonment of mothers and children, a trend toward mother-centered families ... a strong present time orientation with relatively little ability to defer gratification and plan for the future ... and finally, a high tolerance for psychological pathology of all sorts.
>
> Some of the above traits ... are also found in the middle and upper classes /And other segments of the lower class? HL/. However, it is the peculiar patterning of these traits which defines the culture of poverty.[13]

Both Miller and Lewis use the concept of culture to comprehend, as well as to integrate, a variety of people and behaviors. Some of the qualifications -- such as the references to variants or subtypes, and to the peculiar patterning are used to meet the strains that some data may place on assumptions and theory. Miller, for example, suggests that it is not the traits per se, but their specific integration, that defines lower class culture -- "an essentially coherent outlook and way of life."[14] To this, he adds the qualification: "'Lower class' culture, in common with other major cultural systems, does not represent a homogeneous way of life, followed without variation by all those who share its essential features. Systematic research would probably reveal at least three to five major subtypes of lower class culture."[15]

Do we have sufficient evidence that all the variants or subtypes of lower class culture, a "major cultural system" in its own right, exhibit this organization and coherence? Or is it that, it is only necessary that the major lower class cultural system show this organization and

coherence? That all "variants" and "subtypes" do -- or would if the necessary research were available -- is questionable, even if the particular community or group upon which Miller bases his formulations, and encompassing projection does show organization and coherence. Different collectivities of lower class persons are likely to vary significantly in their degrees of integration as well as in the presence or absence of effective bases and means of cultural integration.

There is evidence to support the position that there are urban Negro lower class populations in which there is no single "essentially coherent outlook and way of life." For example, Drake and Cayton distinguished three styles of life in "the world of the lower class" in Chicago prior to World War II. These different styles can hardly be described as meaningfully and "systematically related to <u>one another</u>, rather than to corresponding features of middle class culture."[16]

> ...The lower-class world is complex. Basic to it is a large group of disorganized and broken families, whose style of life differs from that of the other social classes, but who are by no means 'criminal' except so far as the children swell the ranks of the delinquents, or the elders occasionally run afoul of the law for minor misdemeanors. Existing side by side with these people is a smaller, more stable group made up of 'church folks' and those families (church and non-church) who are trying to advance themselves. In close contact with both these groups are the denizens of the underworld ... the lines separating these three basic groups are fluid and shifting, and a given household may incorporate individuals of all three types, since, restricted by low incomes and inadequate housing, the so-called 'respectable' lowers find it impossible to seal themselves off from 'shady' neighbors among whom they find themselves. The 'church folks,' despite their verbal protests, must live in close contact with the world of Sin....[17]

Some of what are called variants within lower class culture or the culture of poverty -- "major cultural systems"-- might well be differences in kind, different orders of historical and cultural phenomena, rather than non-significant variants within a single national or universal cultural system.

In his statement of the problem of lower class culture, Miller refers to "this cultural type" as a given factor and thereby to some extent prejudices, if not determines, the conclusions. A possibly serious consequence of starting with the assumption that it is a cultural type the researcher or practitioner is confronted with, particularly when deviant behavior is involved, is indicated in Potter's comments about studies of national character:

> This inclination to take culture as a given factor and to explain character in terms of the culture without very much consideration of the forces which determined the culture ... is a limiting factor which in the last analysis could interfere with the deepest and fullest understanding of society. The determinants of the culture must themselves be introduced fully and carefully into the analysis.[18]

The constant and basic danger is that the loose use of the term culture can easily encourage situations where "pseudofacts have a way of inducing pseudoproblems, which cannot be solved because matters are not as they purport to be."[19] Illustrations of this danger follow:

The first, in tracing a relationship among lower class membership, lower class ideals, lower class culture and the relative incidence of types of illness, builds connections on a series of questionable

assertions:

> ... class membership as such seems to be related to disease ... In the lower class where expression of anger is permitted, and where non-conformance and rebellion are sanctioned by the class ideals, there exist other means of expressing conflict. Therefore, we are not amazed to see that the diseases of the lower classes are connected with exposure to machines and expressions of hostility as found in the incidence of fractures, accidents and traumatic diseases .... The lower class culture favors conduct disorders and rebellion.[20]

One of the fallacies in the above stems from the exclusion of highly relevant factors, features of the industrial order that lower class culture has little to do with. As Seymour Rubenfeld points out:

> ... in the lower class injuries sustained in relation to the industrial order, as an aspect of the dominant culture, are seen ... as symptomatic of conduct disorders and rebellion ...[21]

In the next example, Miller and Swanson extrapolate a combination of Warner's caste-class theory set forth in the 1930's and the limited data gathered on Negroes in their Detroit study into a sweeping generalization:

> ... it is reasonable to expect that, for another generation or two, Negroes, regardless of social class, will show the same tendencies in child rearing as do lower -- rather than middle-class whites, and that the correspondence will be especially close between their style of life and that of white lower lowers. Eventually, Negro middles may come to use the training practices of white middle-class mothers.[22]

The third illustration is taken from a prominent sociologist's address on urbanization problems:

> In the case of the Negro, now, it is not a problem of Americanization, because the Negro has been an American citizen, on the average, considerably longer than the white person in the United States. It is a problem

> of acculturation, however, because the movement represents essentially a movement of people with a primitive folk culture from the rural slum south, to the urban north and west, or to urban areas within the south.
>
> The process of acculturation is one of the most difficult a human being can experience ... . It requires time -- time measured in human generations rather than years ....
>
> Let us illustrate a few of the problems. A Negro in the Mississippi Delta tosses his empty whisky bottle or beer can in a cotton patch, and what difference does it make? But on the asphalt pavements of a city it can make a difference aesthetically and with respect to safety.[23]

None of the key assertions made above about the relationship between culture and the behavior of urban Negroes is an unqualified fact. One ignores the considerable extent to which long-time first-generation, and second and third generations of urban Negroes are represented in the statistical indications of what is perceived as lower class behavior. In some instances recently-arrived representatives of "a primitive folk culture from the rural slum south" are under-represented in measures of social disorganization.

Social science knowledge and experience indicate that the process of acculturation -- assuming that this is the key problem -- may or may not be difficult; and that it may or may not require "time measured in human generations rather than years." The degree of difficulty and the amount of time involved vary -- and the rate at which differing aspects of differing cultures is taken over, varies, even when the two cultures involved are disparate and alien, as is not the case here. It makes a difference in what we seek to know, and to change, about the lives and the life chances of low income urban Negroes if we assume that their behavior

primarily reflects either the lack of acculturation of the migrant or the imperatives of a Negro lower class culture.

The last illustration suggests important questions that need to be answered: In the search for cultural differences that make a difference, how is the salience of tossed whisky bottles figured? How really significant is this trait in comparison with church attendance, latch key children, illegitimacy rates, housing availability and costs, for example? Do lower class persons toss the empty whisky bottles or beer cans on the streets because of a significant difference in shared norms, because they do not know any better, or because they know better and do not care? And what distinguishes their behavior from that of other American litter bugs? Assuming they do not know any better, how long would it take them to learn not to? And what would be needed to properly cue and reinforce the preferred custom -- or is it a habit?

Although making a slightly different point -- one that is indicative of a romantic view of the lower class -- Thorstein Veblen's comments of another period are thought by Riesman to be "not only wonderful fun but also a very just appraisal of the unconscious motives and consequences of settlement house work in a day when sociology and social work alike were preoccupied with acculturation of the poor to the rich ...."[24]

> ...many of the efforts now in reputable vogue for the amelioration of the indigent population of large cities are of the nature, in great part, of a mission of culture. It is by this means sought to accelerate the rate of speed at which given elements of the upper-class culture find acceptance in the every day scheme of the lower class .... The propaganda of culture is in great part an inculcation of new tastes, or rather of a new

> schedule of proprieties, which have been adapted to the upper-class scheme of life under the guidance of the leisure-class formulation of the principles of status and pecuniary decency. This new schedule of proprieties is intruded into the lower-class scheme of life from the code elaborated by an element of the population whose life lies outside the industrial process; this intrusive schedule can scarcely be expected to fit the exigencies of life for those lower classes more adequately than the schedule which they are themselves working out under the stress of modern industrial life.[25]

One of the unplanned effects of popular circulation of the term, lower class culture, and the tendency to select the more colorful, dramatic, "different" -- but not necessarily culturally significant -- traits, is the reinforcement of invidiousness and double standards of moral judgement. The inclinations to condemn or to condone, to denigrate or to romanticize, when they appear, get in the way of accurate description and interpretation. Connotations flowing from the designation lower class range from those of the "urban jungle" to what David Riesman calls "the urban pastoral." Elizabeth Herzog suggests that indiscriminate use of such short-hand contributes to the development of neostereotypes.[26]

Those to whom we ascribe middle class status and characteristics are likely to accept the placement and selectively, at least, the connotations of middle class culture. There is consensus between the researchers and writers and the subject. On the other hand, lower class is almost exclusively an ascribed, unilateral designation; there are few indications that persons dubbed lower class actively accept the label, or volunteer the use of the term in referring to themselves.

Nor do they appear to think of themselves as participants in lower class culture, as either beneficiaries or victims. To say that they are, but are not aware of it, begs the question.

That the quality of self-approval and voluntary identification is different is a matter of interest when it comes to making judgments about preferred or approved ways of life -- about class ideals. And even though this difference does not invalidate lower class culture as an intellectual ordering, it probably tells as much about the linkage between social science and those who both practice and identify with middle class or popular culture, as it does about lower class people -- many of whom may practice or be identified with lower class or unpopular culture but who themselves identify with middle class culture.

One of the curious effects of the one-way mirror is the fact that some students of lower class people frequently insist on having it both ways: On the one hand, there is the frequent assertion that lower class people are inarticulate, not communicative -- this can be taken to mean either that they may have little to say or that they do not have the native or "cultural" equipment to do so. On the other hand, when lower class people do talk there is the disposition to raise serious questions about what they say, particularly when it is inconsistent with aspects of their behavior or with assumptions about the mainsprings of their behavior. Of course, either or both of these allegations may be objectively true. The point is that slowness of communication, and a gap between professions and behavior, are hardly class traits.

First, there is a question as to how much the differences reported and perceived are reflections of the methods used, and how much they are due to the class and culture of the subjects. The answer depends in part upon the evaluation of additional research that "will be devoted less to counting how many fall into given categories than to evolving and testing propositions about what people believe and what they do."

> ... we need to go beyond what can be learned by using precoded questionnaires and in one interview. Repeated interviews, repeated observations (some participant and semi-participant), and collateral information will be necessary to provide more trustworthy material and to give a third dimension. It goes without saying that we also need to push beyond quickly applied terminology, over-extension of fragmentary research, and reliance on findings drawn from abstracts without critical review of the studies thus summarized.[27]

Second, "pretend rules" -- reflections of what Kroeber called, "the trick of professing one thing and doing another"[28] -- are probably common to all individuals and groups, regardless of class and cultural placement: "They /societies/ vary chiefly in what they are inconsistent about."[29] According to Kroeber, we should not feel too harsh about some of the gaps themselves: "Professions after all mean standards and ideals; and it may be better ... to have standards and fall short of them than not to have them."[30] Whether or not this is a sound position, there is still the key question: Are the things that people are inconsistent about reflective of class and cultural differences? And if they are, why?

****

Our intent in this discussion is not to argue that there are no differences -- to do so, would be absurd, to say the least; it is rather, to stress the need for better understanding of these differences, and better planning of change, based upon such understanding. Underscored here is the necessity for correct answers about: (1) the significance of the differences, (2) the bases of the differences -- and of their persistence, if they persist, and (3) the organization of these differences -- and of collective life around them.

A summing up of some of our concerns about the ways in which culture and class are sometimes used to describe and to explain the behavior of low income people[31] would stress dangers arising from:

(1) Confusions about the meanings and uses of culture and class, and about the kinds of dimensions of behavior to which they might be appropriately and usefully applied;

(2) Questionable extensions of assumptions and of limited data; and what is probably more serious -- the partial and garbled versions that filter into other fields and into popular thinking;

(3) Tendencies toward perception of culture and class as fixed and "determinative" -- as the inflexible arbiters of life chances as well as behavior;

(4) Preoccupations with culture and class that divert not only the consideration of the forces that affect them, but also divert consideration of the probabilities, the pace, and the direction of changes in them;

(5) The urge to order, under one general rubric, varying and frequently disparate behaviors -- or aspects of them. In some

instances, at least, these behaviors might best be understood, and dealt with, as lacking in the coherence and consistency of cultural systems -- and all that this conception connotes;

(6) Tendencies to impute to a total category, such as the lower class, the depreciated -- and probably more dramatic and threatening -- characteristics of a segment of that category;

(7) Underestimation, or exclusion from attention, of the range in behavior: -- "... for some problems the range rather than the mode may be the crucial datum.";[32]

(8) Tendencies to oversimplify complex behavior, frequently obscuring the fact that people today, in Aldous Huxley's words, tend to be "multiple amphibians living in a number of worlds at once";

(9) Misplaced emphasis upon differences, to the exclusion and under-emphasis of basic similarities and commonalities that derive from the standard culture. Some of these differences are of questionable significance and tenacity, while the similarities might be the keys to understanding behavior -- and to programming change. Best results might come from leading to the strengths of individuals and groups, rather than to their perceived weaknesses.

The stimulus for the foregoing concerns comes in part from the experiences and preliminary findings of our current study. In the discussion that follows, some of the data and propositions that accent these concerns will be presented.

Presented here are some illustrative materials and propositions that have to do with variability and range (in certain characteristics of the population studied, as well as in aspects of the behavior of individuals and families), the relationship of behavior and condition to professions and preferences, and the organization of life among people and families in this low income population.

Qualitative analysis of family and community field reports and quantitative analysis of family ratings are yielding some indications of diversity and range.[33] The quantitative analysis includes IBM machine processing of ratings for 39 families in 19 major categories -- a total of possibly 3,500 items per family, with each item given three parallel ratings -- "reported," "observed," and "inferred". All ratings are on a 5-point serial scale -- A (high or most favorable, with a few exceptions) to E (low or least favorable, with a few exceptions).

Tables 1-3 give the distribution of "reported" ratings of 41 parental figures in 13 selected categories. In Table 1, ratings cover the A-E range in eight of the ten categories. The A rating is modal in responsibility for children and in self-appraisal; the C rating is modal in regard for children. The fact that there are no E ratings for responsibility for children and self-appraisal reflects the facts that all of the parent figures rated had some responsibility for the care of children and that no parent figure appraised himself or herself as the poorest type of parent. While there are 14 parent figures whose self-appraisal is A, there are but 7 whose personality is A. There are 16 A or B ratings in satisfaction with the child rearing role and four A or B ratings in satisfaction with the present life position of the children. This latter

Table 1. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" RATINGS IN TEN SELECTED CATEGORIES FOR 41 PARENTAL FIGURES IN 39 HOUSEHOLDS

	A	B	C	D	E	ND	DNA*
Personality	7	13	12	7	2	-	-
Marital relations	3	7	3	7	2	2	17
Relations with children	4	15	15	4	2	1	-
Responsibility for child care	25	12	1	2	-	1	-
Emotional response	10	5	13	4	2	7	-
Regard for children	7	8	18	6	1	1	
Satisfaction with child rearing role	9	7	12	6	3	4	-
Self-esteem	10	12	11	6	2	-	-
Self-appraisal	14	9	9	6	-	3	-
Satisfaction with present life position of children	2	2	16	7	5	9	-

Table 2. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONTROL RATINGS FOR 41 PARENTAL FIGURES IN 39 HOUSEHOLDS

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Control	7	24	9	1

Table 3. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONCERN RATINGS FOR 41 PARENTAL FIGURES IN 39 HOUSEHOLDS

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Concern, general	6	27	8	-
Concern, educational goals	-	29	8	4

* ND -- no data
DNA -- does not apply

is rated at the lower end of the scale more frequently than any of the selected characteristics. On the face of it, this difference makes dubious any assumption that satisfaction with the child rearing role is associated highly with acceptance of position and outlook.

In the sample tables that follow showing the individual profiles for parent figures with different personality ratings, no parent is rated identically in all thirteen categories. The parent figures with A, B and E ratings show least variability. Those rated C in personality show the most variability. Those rated D in personality fluctuate more than those rated A.

The qualitative analysis also provides indications of variability and range. An example of this variability is seen in connection with parental concern about children's health, education and welfare. Evidences of positive concern and a willingness to sacrifice for children, despite deprivation and trouble, are found in a good proportion of the families. Mrs. R (F-10), whose profile for 13 selected characteristics is shown in Tables 4-6, provides one illustration of a combination of these elements.

Mr. and Mrs. R are the parents of eleven children, nine of whom are living at home. They have lived in Washington less than three years. Mrs. R remained in jail for two weeks while awaiting trial for assault on her husband. Her minor children were placed in Junior Village[34] when she was taken to jail.

Excerpts from the mother's account of the experience and of the manner in which she weighed personal and family alternatives follow:

Table 4. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" RATINGS IN TEN SELECTED CATEGORI FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-10

	A	B	C	D	E	ND	D
Personality	x						
Marital relations		x					
Relations with children	x						
Responsibility for child care	x						
Emotional response	x						
Regard for children	x						
Satisfaction with child rearing role	x						
Self-esteem		x					
Self-appraisal	x						
Satisfaction with present life position of children			x				

Table 5. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONTROL RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-10

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Control		x		

Table 6. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONCERN RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-10

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Concern, general		x		
Concern, educational goals		x		

* ND -- no data
DNA -- does not apply

You know, I didn't have to stay in jail those two weeks. I could have paid $40 for bail and gotten out but I just kind of felt that maybe I'd stay there for a while. I just thought I'd be better off.

I had $73.00 on me because I had the rent money. One mind told me to pay the bail and the other mind said no. So when they told me I could make one telephone call and asked me who I wanted to call I told them to just call the rent man and tell him to come and get the rent and I would stay in jail.

The rent man came and got it that Tuesday. I was glad I paid the rent as we had to have a place to stay when I got out. The only thing that worried me while I was in jail was the children. I worried about them as they have never been separated from me before. When I got out of jail my husband came for me and asked me if I didn't want to come home and fix something to eat for the children. I told him, 'No, I just want to get the children' and I kept right on from the jail out to Junior Village to get them. They had been taken good care of there, but there won't be no more separations. The next separation will just have to be a death separation because I know I won't do anything like that again....

I have always treated my husband nice and tried to help him. I also tried to share. When I have worked I have given him money when he needs it. I don't drink and I told him that if he can't control his drinking then he shouldn't drink. I didn't like him out there in the yard acting ugly in front of all the neighbors....

Before I go back to jail I'll leave. This is the first and last time I'll go to a place like that. Not to jail. Not to be locked up. But I did get some relief in that place. Somehow you don't mind it when you've been listening to cursing day and night. It worried me away from the children so long but I did get some rest. I got tired of sitting around there and asked for some work to do and they put me in the laundry. The matron was sorry to see me go because I was such a good worker.

Our materials and analysis indicate that parents who show a high degree of concern as well as parents who show a low degree of concern are found variously among families receiving public assistance and those which are not, among one-parent and two-parent families, among recently-arrived families and among those either native to Washington or long-time residents in the city. Distinguishable are parents with high concern who demonstrate it in their behavior, parents with considerable verbal concern but who exhibit inconsistent or contradictory behavior, and parents who express little or no concern and who are extremely neglectful.

Parents whose <u>actions</u> indicate a high degree of parental concern frequently show more attention to the children's welfare than to their own personal needs or demands. Mrs. Y (F-14), whose profile for 13 selected characteristics is given in Tables 7-9, is an example. Her educational level is higher than most of the mothers in our low income study population. Her husband left her with eleven children at a time when she was seven months pregnant with the twelfth. Active concern and regard are suggested in the following:

> Gloria [age 11] and Peter [age 8] were slow readers and I helped them learn to read better and develop a vocabulary. Peter is a little rascal, but his teacher says he is a little boy and that is to be expected. I called the teacher last week and asked her how he was doing and she said he is doing fine now. I also helped Sue [age 13] develop a vocabulary. Now she is the secretary for one of the school clubs....
>
> Gloria [age 11] is trying real hard to do well in school. She now has a large black circle under her eye and the doctor at _____ Hospital says she will have to have glasses. Welfare is giving her the glasses soon. The truant officer was here because Gloria had to stay out of school for two weeks due to her eye condition. I

Table 7. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" RATINGS IN TEN SELECTED CATEGORIES FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-14

	A	B	C	D	E	ND	DNA*
Personality		x					
Marital relations							x
Relations with children		x					
Responsibility for child care	x						
Emotional response		x					
Regard for children		x					
Satisfaction with child rearing role	x						
Self-esteem	x						
Self-appraisal	x						
Satisfaction with present life position of children			x				

Table 8. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONTROL RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-14

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Control	x			

Table 9. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONCERN RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-14

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Concern, general	x			
Concern, educational goals		x		

* ND -- no data
DNA -- does not apply

> was upset when the truant officer came because if there is one thing I do it is to make sure that the children are kept able to keep their school attendance up. What happened was that I did not know that I was supposed to have taken the prescription or slip which the doctor gave me to the Welfare. I thought that the Hospital had sent a slip to Welfare. So here I was waiting for Gloria's glasses and Welfare didn't have the slip. The minute the truant officer came I called the Welfare and was told to bring the slip for the glasses up there. That was the day I went straight up to Welfare with the slip and walked /3½ miles/ home because I did not have a car token.

A second group of parents -- those whose concern is more verbal than active -- tend to be impatient and to apply discipline inconsistently. They appear to be somewhat self-centered. Mrs. M (F-11), a mother of four children on public assistance, is an example. Described as "fond of the children but rather insensitive," she said, "I often get tired of the children and want peace and quiet and to be let alone." When asked about the satisfactions of adulthood, Mrs. M replied, "There is no blessing in being grown up. I have my children; they are a blessing." Yet, on another occasion she commented, "I don't see why people run to doctors to have children."

Further indications of the quality of this mother's relations with her children -- and incidentally, of the unreality of her aspirations for one of her children, at least -- are given below:

> When Mrs. M said that she hoped that Daniel would be a doctor and Reginald a lawyer, her little girl heard her and said with a laugh 'That's too much!' (Reginald is a slow learner -- eight years old in the first grade)....
>
> She said that Reginald had not been a happy child, that he has been sickly since he was a small baby, and that she would often have to leave work to rush him to the hospital. She was worried about his moods and said that he often carries a sour expression on his face.

> She described her feelings when the children did not eat a meal she had taken pains to prepare: 'If they don't eat, it hurts my feelings. I felt so bad when they did not eat the sandwiches that I began to wash clothes, and I washed so hard that I had a pain in my back all night.'

Before Mrs. M went on public assistance, she worked and left her children at home. While Mrs. M was at work, her 12-year old daughter was molested sexually by an elderly man -- a tenant in the same building -- whom she had asked to "look out" for the children while she was away. When she learned about this, one of the things she did was to give the girl "a good spanking for letting the man do things to her." When she was asked why she did this, she replied:

> I sure spanked her for not coming to me, and for not knowing no better. She should have knowed better than letting that man bother her.

Mrs. M sought to provide character training and control through a mixture of rewards and punishment.

> She said that she gives the children an allowance because it keeps them from stealing and because it also keeps them happy. If she thinks they spend it foolishly, she punishes them either by cutting the allowance or by not giving them supper.
>
> When asked about preferred methods of punishment, she responded: 'I beat my children.' When asked if beating children helps, she replied: 'It helps me.'
>
> She said that she does not expect to be able to do much about the children as they grow older:
>
> 'I can't say nothing to the children. If they get into a bad habit like drinking, I pray they will be put away in an institution.'

Her profile for 13 selected characteristics is given in Tables 10-12. It shows considerable variability. She has an A to E range in ratings.

Table 10. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" RATINGS IN TEN SELECTED CATEGORIES FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-11

	A	B	C	D	E	ND	DNA*
Personality		x					
Marital relations					x		
Relations with children			x				
Responsibility for child care	x						
Emotional response			x				
Regard for children			x				
Satisfaction with child rearing role				x			
Self-esteem		x					
Self-appraisal			x				
Satisfaction with present life position of children			x				

Table 11. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONTROL RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-11

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Control	x			

Table 12. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONCERN RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-11

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Concern, general		x		
Concern, educational goals			x	

* ND -- no data
DNA -- does not apply

The E is for marital relations; she is now separated from her husband. This limited profile suggests a mother with a fairly strong personality who has total responsibility for the care of her children. She thinks well of herself and believes she is doing a fairly adequate job of child rearing, although she does not get too much satisfaction out of this role. She exhibits some warmth in her relations with her children but this fluctuates. She is much more controlling than understanding. While she has a general concern for her children's welfare, chiefly their physical well-being, she exhibits less concern in specific areas, such as education.

A third group of parents are those who express little or no concern and are extremely neglectful. (See profiles in Tables 13-15, and Tables 16-18.) These parents show some tendency to use their children as scapegoats; they appear to resent their children for being dependent on them. Mrs. S (F-2) said:

> When you are a child, people do everything for you, but when you grow up, you have to do everything for yourself and the children too. Yes, these here children of mine get on my nerves and I get tired of wiping up this pissy floor every day.

After observing this mother's punishment of her five-year old child in the course of several field visits, the field worker commented:

> He now vomits every time anyone scolds him, if the scolding comes just after he has eaten. He first vomits and then sucks his finger. He does not cry very much. If he does cry, he frequently gets another whipping for crying.

Some parents in the third category, in contrast to the more adequate parents, appear reluctant to talk about the specifics of child rearing. A field worker had the impression that generally these mothers cannot

Table 13. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" RATINGS IN TEN SELECTED CATEGORIES FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-2

	A	B	C	D	E	ND	DNA*
Personality					x		
Marital relations							x
Relations with children					x		
Responsibility for child care			x				
Emotional response				x			
Regard for children				x			
Satisfaction with child rearing role					x		
Self-esteem				x			
Self-appraisal				x			
Satisfaction with present life position of children					x		

Table 14. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONTROL RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-2

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Control			x	

Table 15. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONCERN RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-2

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Concern, general			x	
Concern, educational goals		x		

* ND -- no data
DNA -- does not apply

Table 16. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" RATINGS IN TEN SELECTED CATEGORIES FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-36

	A	B	C	D	E	ND	DNA*
Personality			x				
Marital relations		x					
Relations with children				x			
Responsibility for child care		x					
Emotional response					x		
Regard for children				x			
Satisfaction with child rearing role					x		
Self-esteem					x		
Self-appraisal				x			
Satisfaction with present life position of children			x				

Table 17. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONTROL RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-36

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Control	x			

Table 18. DISTRIBUTION OF "REPORTED" CONCERN RATINGS FOR PARENT FIGURE IN HOUSEHOLD F-36

	Extreme	Average	Little	ND
Concern, general			x	
Concern, educational goals		x		

* ND -- no data
DNA -- does not apply

bear to talk very much about how they are bringing their children up, unless they first get their own stories in. A recurrent complaint among them was: "I don't feel well today. I don't know what's the matter with me, but I just don't feel well."

Our field reports document the impression that regardless of the quality of active concern about their children parents, with few exceptions, do not prefer or approve the circumstances in which they now live and in which their children are being brought up. Even in the case of the most neglectful parents, the evidence points to the fact that they ascribe no virtue to neglectful behavior in themselves or in others or to neighborhood disorganization and poor housing. If there is any suggestion of approval, it smacks of perverseness, defiance, bravado, or desperation of the I-don't-care type.

The materials that are being analyzed lend considerable support to the proposition that these low income parents tend to show greater conformity to, and convergence with, middle class standards in their verbalizations of values -- in what they say they want (or would like to want) -- than in their actual behavior.[35] Preliminary findings that illustrate this have been cited in a previous paper.[36] Relevant propositions mentioned then are being examined more fully. Among them are these:

> There are marked variations in parents' confidence in their abilities, as in their wills, to control, and to provide emotional support for their children; the lack of confidence in some instances is associated with slackening of efforts, or diminution of the will, to cope with crucial aspects of child rearing.

The apparent freedom of children in some low income families is not necessarily "granted." In instances, it appears to be wrested from begrudging parents or parental substitutes.

Low income mothers in this study have relatively high educational aspirations for their children; they want better housing and neighborhoods. However, what constitutes sufficient education, and a good job, is not always specified: "There is frequently communicated a combination of realism and pessimism, a kind of wise weariness that may appear to belie the very educational or career goals they express for at least some of their children."

The belief is not valid that broad categories of people, such as low income groups, newcomers, and certain ethnic minorities, are not troubled by illegitimacy. Birth in wedlock and marriage are important values, but in any given instance, either or both might be pre-empted by another important value, or the realization of them might be thwarted by practical considerations.

Instead of elaborating the above, we will present some materials that suggest other facets of the complex relationship between behavior and conditions and professions and preferences. The materials used are drawn from reports of a male and a female field worker who did participant observation -- the man with "street corner" male adults and the woman as a resident in a public housing project. In the first set of illustrations, two men indicate something of their slants on themselves, their families, and life.

In the second set of illustrations, material is presented on the consumption behavior and on parents of some of the residents of public

housing to suggest certain possible consequences of the impingement on young families of the pressures of poverty and preferences for the good life at the same time.

Although the present condition and outlook of each of the men is different, their expressions exhibit a common inconsistency and a preference for recognizable standard goals. In the first set of excerpts from field documents a semi-literate 30-year old construction worker expresses himself on a variety of subjects, including himself.

> Sonny has been in Washington 9 years. During this period he has married and separated, and fathered eight children -- three with his wife, and by his account, five others by five different women.

On education and "being somebody":

> /Sonny is talking about a man the field worker (FW) and he had met/

Sonny: That's what I ought to be doing. I ought to be in his place...dressed nice, going to school, got a good job.

FW: You make more than he does.

Sonny: It's not the money....It's position, I guess. He's got a position. When he finish school he gonna be a supervisor. People respect him.... Just thinking about people with an education and position gives me a feeling right here /touching his stomach/.

FW: You're educated too, Sonny.... You have a skill, a trade. You're a cement finisher. You can make a building, pour a sidewalk.

Sonny: That's different. Look, can anybody do what you're doing? Can anybody just come up and do your job?

FW: I don't think so.

Sonny: Well, in one week I can teach you cement finishing. You won't be as good as me because you won't have the experience but you'll be a cement finisher. That's what I mean. Anybody can do what I'm doing and that's what gives me this feeling....

Suppose I like this girl. I go to her house and I meet her father. He starts talking about what he done today. He talks about operating on somebody and sewing them up and about surgery. I know he's a doctor 'cause of the way he talks. Then she starts talking about what she did. Maybe she's a boss or a supervisor. Maybe she's a lawyer and her father say to me, 'and what do you do, Mr. Washington?'....

You remember, at the court house, Lonnie's trial? You and Jim Marshall was talking in the hall?.... You remember, I just stood there listening. I didn't say a word...because I didn't even know what you were talking about. That's happened to me a lot.

FW: Hell, you're nothing special. That happens to everybody. Nobody knows everything. One man is a doctor so he talks about surgery....But doctors and teachers don't know nothing about concrete. You're a cement finisher and that's your specialty.

Sonny: Maybe so, but when was the last time you saw anybody standing around talking about concrete?

****

Sonny turned away from a TV drama involving a young Mexican boy and his father to say that if he had a million dollars he would travel all over the world and learn a lot of things "like you and those people at the museum" [Sonny had earlier accompanied the field worker to visit a museum that he had worked on as a construction worker but had never been inside after it was finished].

The Field Worker asked why this was important to him.

Sonny: Well, I think about my oldest boy [about 9] a lot. I want to be a big man in his eyes. If he's out on the street playing with some kids and one boy say, 'My daddy's a doctor' and the other boy say, 'My daddy's a lawyer,' I want my boy to be able to say that his daddy is a big man too.

It's too late for that now. I can't hardly read or write but I still want to learn things....

On being a parent, in-wedlock, and out-of-wedlock:

We were sitting in Dickie's Grill and Sonny was recalling the circumstances in which Hattie had told him he was the father of her unborn child. 'When a woman says it's your baby, you just got to go along with her.'

Later, we talked about Linda, the mother of his youngest child. He said that when Linda told him she was pregnant, she said she knew an old woman who would get rid of it for $50: 'You're a married man, you can't help me.'

'You have the baby,' Sonny told her, 'I'll do what I can.'

I /the field worker/ asked whether the $50 had anything to do with it. He said the money had nothing to do with it.

> Everybody should have a chance. My mother didn't get rid of me like that, so why should I do that to somebody else? That wouldn't be right....When he grows up, maybe he be a doctor or lawyer. He come to me when I'm old. He say, 'you "holp" me when I was little, now you old and I help you.'...

Shirley, the white waitress and co-owner of Dickie's Grill, joined us for a beer. Shirley, who lived alone and was five months pregnant, said she was making arrangements to put her baby out for adoption because she wouldn't be able to give the baby the care, time and attention he had a right to. 'It wouldn't be fair for me to keep it,' she said. 'I know I'm doing the right thing.' When she left I asked Sonny if he thought Shirley was doing the right thing.

> No. If you got a baby and you got to scuffle, you scuffle. You don't give him away. Suppose it's a boy. A boy always likes a older head. Suppose he starts going out with this woman. He say he an orphan -- is that what you call it? -- and she say that she had a baby once but she give him away. Then they find out that she's his mother.

/Do you know anyone that's happened to?/

> No, but I've heard about it.

****

Sonny had just confessed to me that he had been lying about his wife and children living with him. He said his wife had left him in November, 1960.

It was all a lie, Ralph, but I love my wife. When I go to bed at night she's with me and my kids are too and deep down in my heart I believe she's coming back. I really believe it. And if she do, I'm going to throw out all these other women and I'm going to change my whole life.

Sonny and I /the field worker/ were idling in the poolroom.

Children learn from their parents. If you want them to do right, you've got to do right. If you go around drinking and cussing in front of them, they'll come up drinking and cussing. If a man can't help drinking and cussing, that's O.K., but when he comes home he can't do it in front of the children.

/What else do you do to teach them the right thing?/

I hit them sometimes. That's important to help them know right from wrong. But you can't let them keep on doing bad things and then whip them for things they did a long time ago. You got to whip them when they done it so they'll know what it's for....Sometimes they ain't going to listen if you don't whip them.

On belief and knowledge:

A one is the major number /because/ it's the beginning of everything. All other numbers got ones in them. But a zero, you can't put nothing in a zero. It's not a number, it's nothing. A three, you can put a one and a two in a three, but you can't put nothing in a zero.

Like the Bible say, there's the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They are all the same. Now, how can there be three in one? But the Bible say it. I don't know it's so. You don't know it's so. But we believe it's so. Nobody teach me something else so I believe it.

Just like c-a-t spell 'cat'. That's what I was taught to believe. But I don't know it spell 'cat', I just believe it spell 'cat'. Maybe it really spell 'dog', but I was brought up to believe it spell 'cat'....

> I believe there's a heaven and a hell 'cause I was brought up to believe it. But I don't know for myself there's a heaven and a hell.

Presented next are the roughly parallel comments of a 28-year old man who has been in Washington six years. He is married and the father of two children.

On being somebody:

> I believe in religion. I live by The Book.... I don't drink (it just never appealed to me). I don't gamble and I don't stay out late or run around. I work hard....I always save some pennies from every dollar.

****

> I live for wants. I don't fool around. I see something I want, I get it. When I go to the Safeway, if I see a steak marked $5.00 and I want a steak, I turn it over, look at both sides, and if I like it I buy it.

****

> I live for today...but I keep an eye on tomorrow, too. When I go to bed, my wife knows that if I don't live 'til morning she got $10,000 for herself and the kids.
>
> If I die, flowers won't do no good....All I want is a plain box. Let someone say, 'He was a good man,' then put me in the hole, cover me with dirt and let me go.
>
> My wife's check goes straight to the bank. We don't even look twice at it. And we save something from my check too if we can.
>
> When I get paid, we sit down together with pencil and paper and we write down how we're going to spend the money. Everything gets written down, everything. We even write down the 60 or 70 cents I'm going to put in that pinball machine right there. I don't drink, I don't gamble, and I don't stay out late or run around. I work hard and that's relaxation for me.

****

Next year, or the year after that, we're going to buy a house with a piece of ground, maybe out in Virginia. I don't like being next to somebody else and neither does my wife....We want to be by ourselves.

****

When I fight, I fight to hurt and kill. That's why I don't like to fight. I hate fighting. A man come up to me to talk trash, I turn around and walk away. But if he keep on and really piss me off, I'll fight him and try to kill him.

Suppose you and me fight and you beat me decent. I'll shake hands with you, say you whipped me and go home. But I'll come back tomorrow and fight you again and if you beat me decent again I'll go home and come back the next day and the next day until I beat you.

On marriage and the family:

Sometimes my wife uses some kind of petroleum jelly -- I don't remember the name but it comes in a long tube. Most of the time she don't use anything. Afterwards, she gets up and douches herself...not once /have they had any trouble/. A douche is all /that/ is necessary.

****

I want my boy to have everything I didn't have. I want him to have everything he wants, within reason....

You can't give a kid too much. You can't give a kid too much loving or anything. There's no such thing as too much for a kid.

****

Sometimes it's good to take a switch to a kid until he's 10 or 11 years old. I ain't taken a switch to either one of mine in a year and a half, but I'll do it if I thinks they needs it. But not after they're 10 or 11. When a boy gets that old, it starts getting hard for

him to cry. If you take a switch to him and he don't cry, he starts thinking he's tough, and taking a switch to him just makes him hard.

****

You got to talk to children, to explain things to them.

****

When my little girl gets up in the morning, the first thing she wants to do is eat. I tell her no, that she got to take a bath and then she can eat. I don't make her get dressed all the way. I tell her she can set at the table in her underwear if she takes her bath, and while she's doing that I put on the water for oatmeal or something.

****

You gotta know when to see what they're /children/ doing too. Sometimes my boy gets to tearing up the Sunday papers. He knows he ain't supposed to do that and sometimes I don't let on I see him doing it. Then I looks surprised and I say, 'Somebody tore up the Sunday paper. Why don't you put it in the trash?' And he goes and puts the paper in the trash and that's all there is to it. A kid needs that sometimes.

****

.../children/got to know when you're just fooling around and when you mean business. Most of the time, my kids know just from my tone of voice or the way I look whether I'm playing around and they know they gotta listen to me when I ain't playing around.

****

Dick says he tells his son that he expects him to do as he's told to do. If he's told to stick his head in a ditch, that's what he's to do. 'Cause I say so. Don't do as I do, do as I say.'

****

When Dick's 8-year old son came home from school crying, and explained that he had been beaten up by some bigger boys, Dick

> told him he didn't want him to come home crying from school. He was to return to school the next day and if the boys bothered him again, he was to stay and fight hard as he could and do as much damage to them as he could. And if he was beaten, he was to do the same thing the next day and the next.

To be discussed next -- in the context of our interest in the relationship between behavior and conditions and professions and preferences -- are the consumption behavior of some residents in public housing and the contrasts between the present life conditions of three young mothers and the present life conditions of the parents and siblings of these mothers. A field worker's reports, made during fifteen months of participant observation as a working mother resident in public housing, provide the illustrative materials and impressions. The first concern the use and value attached to home furnishings.

Young families who are just setting up their households and making new purchases show strong interest in home furnishings. The thing that distinguishes one household from another is not so much the taste displayed but the quantity and quality of the furnishings. Tastes are in the current vogue -- modern furniture, pole lamps, the pair of matching living room lamps, portable bars, and colored telephones. Whereas any one apartment may not have all of these, there are usually enough "conspicuous consumption" items -- particularly among the young families -- to suggest awareness of and attempts to conform to current vogues and standards in furnishings. Many of the families appear to be preoccupied with fixing up their homes. Emphasis is placed on color schemes and many change from drapes in the winter to cottage curtains in the summer.

The television set is almost universal; the sets are frequently the types with the largest screens. The record player is almost as universal as the television set and is frequently part of a radio-TV-phonograph combination. Record collecting is a common hobby with frequent exchange of latest acquisitions among friends.

An item of furnishing which is highly valued but appears infrequently is a rug. A feature of the field worker's apartment which drew frequent comment from visitors was the fact that she had rugs on the floors. One visiting mother said with a sigh, "Some day I'm gonna have a rug." This same mother borrowed a 9 x 12 cotton rug from a friend whose husband was in the service to prepare her apartment for her own husband's return from the service. The field worker commented that these incidents startled her into realizing that much that is taken for granted by practicing middle class people is beyond the horizon of many apparently would-be-middle class but low income families.

Beneath the surface of modern furniture, hi-fi's and record players there are often glaring gaps in furnishings. Pronounced in many instances is a lack of dishes, linens, scrubbing paraphenalia, irons and the like. This seems a paradox in light of the presence of heavy, relatively expensive pieces. The answer lies in part in the fact that heavy goods are easily obtained on credit, whereas expendable items are characteristically bought for cash. This reflects a problem for many low income families: After paying the installments on the major furniture items, buying food and clothing and paying rent there is not much left for other purchases.

Installment buying appears to be almost universal; as one mother said: "Everyone buys from the three H's -- Hahn's, Hub's and Hecht's."

The initial interest in the family background of some of the young parents was stimulated by close observation of contrasts and inconsistencies in the behavior and attitudes of a neighbor of the field worker. Seeking to know and understand her better led to contacts with her outside family. Experiences in this instance encouraged similar follow-ups with other families. These help to throw light on questions about why some of the young parents are like they are, as well as to give strong intimations about their futures.

Discussed here are three mothers -- all natives of Washington and in their mid-twenties. Each mother married while in high school following pregnancy. Each marriage has been unsatisfactory. Two mothers have four children below six years of age; one of these mothers' husband is in the service -- the other is separated from her husband, has one out-of-wedlock child, and was pregnant again by the same man. This second mother received public assistance. The third mother has two children ages four and five. She is with her husband and was then pregnant with a third child.

Each of the mothers is from a family in which there were several children -- one is the oldest of six children, another the oldest of five, and the third, the middle child of five. In each instance, the parents of the mothers are living together, with some of the younger children still in the house. In each instance, both parents

of the mothers have generally always worked. Employment of the parents of the mothers is or has been in service occupations with civil service status.

The noteworthy thing about the parents of each of these mothers is that they are all upwardly mobile home owners, despite large families. For example, within the last five years one family has moved into a detached 8 room house in a middle-range income area. Another moved into the same area because of the "rowdiness of the housing project children" in the neighborhood in which they formerly lived. In discussions about their parents all three mothers appear to perceive their parents as strongly motivated to acquire new and better things -- a car, a house in a higher status neighborhood, new furniture. And the mothers seem to perceive themselves as casualties of this parental motivation. One said that she didn't think her family should have "sacrificed" her for a car.

Another, in almost identical words, said she didn't think her parents should have "sacrificed" her for a house. The mothers see themselves as having gone without adequate food and clothing while their parents were making efforts to move upward, as having been pressed into substitute mother roles with younger siblings while their mothers worked. None has a close relationship with her own mother. With indications of resentment they see their younger siblings as having lives and opportunities much better than theirs were. The younger brother of one is now a college sophomore.

The parents of the mother with illegitimate children are very critical of her; yet, it appears that this mother is more actively

concerned about her children's affectional needs than her parents were about hers. The father of another mother has never forgiven his son-in-law for getting his daughter pregnant while she was in high school; his daughter sees herself struggling with little success to develop a kind of "togetherness" in her family that she says she did not have in her home as a child. The third mother's parents appeared to be so tightly budgeted in their expensively furnished new house that they were obviously reluctant to feed their daughter's four hungry children during an extended Sunday visit. In contrast is the occasion when this same daughter shared scarce food supplies for several days with the two year old child she took in when a mother and five children were evicted.

A paradox is present in situations of this kind if striving to "get ahead" -- to acquire the visible signs of better living and to get into a better neighborhood to bring up their children, wittingly or unwittingly sacrifices a child, or children, in the process.

In these families -- those of the young mothers in public housing and of their parents in middle income residential areas -- the operation of class and cultural factors is complicated. In a sense, these are very knowing families. They straddle deprivation and poverty and the better life and new affluence. Many of the wants and ways associated with each condition are familiar to the families of both generations. What each does about the wants and ways associated with these conditions, or can do about them -- and why -- are different matters.

And of course, for us, the really difficult questions are: Which wants and which ways are "critical" -- for personal or family viability?

For social approval? For description? For mobilization? For change?

Although the analysis of our data on low income families is not yet completed, field materials and analysis to date point to wide variety in the concrete human styles of individuals and families. Our data collection was guided by a definition of low income rather than lower class; yet, despite the fact that the two conceptions are not synonymous, our experience and materials have relevance for the discussion of lower class and lower class culture. All low income people are not lower class and vice versa; however, all the families in the low income population under study would undoubtedly be placed in the lower class by any of the conventional measures of socio-economic status. The question then comes to be, do all lower class people practice lower class culture? With Walter Miller, we would answer that they do not. A further question is who or what groups in the lower class practice lower class culture?

Walter Miller's conception of lower class culture holds that although it is not exclusive to lower class people,

> ...the way of life...is characteristic of a substantial portion of...our population defined as 'lower class' [and] the material applies most accurately to that subsegment of this group whose family system centers around the 'female-based' household....If we take 40% of the households within this group to be 'female-based' units, we obtain an estimate of about 15% for the 'hard core' lower class group.[37]

This apparently means that lower class culture is seen in its clearest form in lower class "female-based" households -- roughly estimated as including one in six lower class persons. This leaves considerable room for variation among the other 85 per cent of the lower class, and for considerable dilution of lower class culture

in the rest of the lower class population. Our field experience suggests that is is highly questionable that all or even a substantial majority of the low income (lower class) "female-based" households are responsive to and supporters of a lower class culture system in the sense that W. Miller uses it. The evidence that many undoubtedly are responsive to different values, or are responsive in different ways to the same values, is not the point. The additional evidence of the existence of alternate and mixed styles among low income "female-based" households and among other categories of the lower class population underscores other conceptual and practical points: There are differing styles of lower class behavior; and action programs should be geared to differences within the segment, and to similarities to the larger culture.

Different types of low income (lower class) families often live side by side in the same neighborhood or area, but often that is practically all that they do, or want to do together. Still much community organization and block work assumes that because these low income (lower class) people live in the same area that this in itself provides a basis for developing a viable and organized community.

The diversity and lack of consensus that characterize some locales in which the poorer members of the lower class live are suggested in the impressions of an anthropologist who spent a summer studying a one-block low income enclave:

> The scope and intensity of my observations were insufficient to justify generalization about the social position of those whose conduct of life is

> conspicuously disorganized in terms of the standards of the larger society and of their own immediate needs. Such persons include the men who are unable to hold a job and support their families, and the perennial ADC mothers who exist in a kind of serial polyandry. I do not know to what extent and in what areas of activity such persons are accepted and rejected by their neighbors. Acceptance, especially for the women, is certainly greater than in the larger urban society, but some censure, and a larger portion of pity is to be found in the attitudes and behavior of most respondents toward these "disorganized" persons.
>
> Is there a representative Upton Square resident? In a sense there is not, since individuality and idiosyncrasies of character flourish there as they do not, at present, in conformist middle-class society. It can be stated, however, that most Upton Square men and women work hard, or fairly hard, for little material reward, judged by general American standards, and that they lead relatively circumscribed lives.
>
> What are the goods that they obtain, or wish to obtain from life? As stated earlier, I cannot venture to generalize about areas and modes of satisfaction, nor about the levels of aspiration, except to say that the former, although various, center to a considerable -- to me even somewhat surprising -- extent around life; and the latter are more in evidence than some sociological studies of the working class would lead one to expect. An Upton Square parent certainly hopes that his children will avoid 'getting into trouble,' but the aspirations of my respondents for their children were not limited to this negative hope as were those of the 'hard core' proletarians reported in Walter Miller's Boston study. It must be said, however, that Upton Square parents appear to be as baffled by their adolescent children and neighbors as are their fellow-Americans in many kinds of communities and status-levels.[38]

At this point in our experience, the Sterling County Study's description of life in Sterling County's depressed areas is more congenial to our view of the essential quality of life in the District of Columbia for many, but not all, low income people:

> Although these areas are not completely lacking in the functional prerequisities, they are by comparison

> markedly deficient. The properties of being a system and the density of interaction are exceedingly low and inaction and noncommunication prevail over collaboration and synthesis. There is, moreover, more diversity than consensus among those sentiments which do exist....The tendency is toward isolated behavior and unpredictability.[39]

Early impressions of our Washington family and community materials -- and they are impressions that are now being checked thoroughly -- were that the behaviors observed in the varying low income families were not generated by or guided by an urban lower class "cultural system in its own right -- with an integrity of its own." This is not meant to suggest that there are no differences other than income between this category and the adequate income category of the population, or that there are no modalities in the characteristics and in the behaviors of this segment. On the contrary, we know that our findings will point to differences, and we are convinced that there are several modes or styles rather than a single or basic mode or style. We are impressed by the range within the low income category, and we are concerned with the kinds of differences between income or class categories, the reasons given for these differences, and their significance.

The behaviors of the bulk of the families appear as pragmatic adjustments to external and internal stresses and deprivations experienced in the quest for essentially common values. A seeming paradox is that affirmation of, if not demonstration of, some of America's traditional virtues and values in their purest form is found to be strong and recurrent among even the most deprived.

Our view is that it is probably more fruitful to think of different types of lower class families reacting in various ways to the facts of their position and to relative isolation rather than to the imperatives of a lower class culture. It is important that we not confuse basic life chances and actual behavior with basic cultural values and preferences.

Our experience suggests further that the focus of efforts to change should be on background conditions and on precipitants of the deviant behaviors rather than on presumably different class or cultural values. In other words it is not likely that the way to remove the threat and to reduce the costs of deviant aspects of the behavior of lower class people -- or rather segments of the lower class that threaten and cost most at this time -- is to be found in direct efforts to change a lower class culture that is perceived as significantly different and alien. Nor is it likely to be found in efforts to indulge (because of a kind of functionalism or cultural relativism), to seal off, or in efforts to try to get lower class people themselves to revamp what is presumed to be their culture.

The concept lower class culture has valid, but limited, uses in tackling contemporary problems of dependency, delinquency, crime, and mental health. However, the fact that the concept is valid, and necessary, for certain purposes -- and for use on certain levels or in other types of situations that might seem analagous, but need not be -- does not mean necessarily that in its present form it is either the appropriate guide to actions or the most useful

single tool to place in the hands of those who deal directly with people with problems or with people who are problems.

Among the reasons why it may not be appropriate is the inherent difficulty in reducing high level abstract descriptions of a designated class of people into practical guidelines for dealing with the concrete and complex behavior of persons assigned to the class. In the case of urban problem behavior, these guidelines should be understandable and manageable by professionals who are not students of culture -- by persons whose interest in behavior and mandate to act with respect to it, is (or should be) in terms of the individuals, families, and groups within the class rather than in terms of the class itself. In this sense, the concept culture, although useful, may be a clumsy tool for the kind and level of action that is attempted by, or required of, many practicing professionals.

Further, our experience suggests that regardless of the conceptual merit and appeal of the idea of an integrated lower class culture, it is probably better that the planner and the practitioner anticipate and be prepared to plan and act with reference to de facto lacks of uniformity and order in various lower class variants of the basic American culture.

FOOTNOTES

1. A 5-year project, sponsored by the Health and Welfare Council of the National Capital Area, and supported by Mental Health Project Grants, 5-R11 - MH 278-4, from the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The operating title is "Child Rearing Practices Among Low Income Families in the District of Columbia." The project is now in its fourth year.

2. Clyde Kluckhohn, "Anthropology," in James R. Newman (ed.), What Is Science?, Washington Square Press, New York, 1961, p. 357.

3. Evening Star, Washington, D.C., December 13, 1961.

4. M. G. Smith, "Social and Cultural Pluralism," in Social and Cultural Pluralism in the Caribbean: Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 83, Art. 5, January 20, 1960, p. 770.

5. David Riesman, "Psychological Types and National Character," American Quarterly, Vol. V, 1953, p. 330; cited by David M. Potter, People of Plenty, Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960, p. 11.

6. A. L. Kroeber, Anthropology, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1948, p. 275.

7. David Riesman, Thorstein Veblen: A Critical Interpretation, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960, p. 186.

8. Walter B. Miller, "Cultural Features of an Urban Lower Class Community," (mimeographed), n.d., p. 8, f.n.

9. Ibid., p. 7, f.n.

10. Ibid.

11. Oscar Lewis, The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family, Random House, New York, 1961, pp. xxiv-xxv.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., pp. xxvi-xxvii.

14. W. B. Miller, op. cit., p. 16, f.n.

15. Ibid., p. 14.

16. Ibid., p. 8.

17. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, Black Metropolis, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1945, p. 600.

18. Potter, op. cit., p. 62.

19. Robert K. Merton, "Notes on Problem-Finding in Sociology," in Merton, et al. (eds.), Sociology Today: Problems and Prospects, Basic Books, New York, 1959, p. xv.

20. J. Ruesch, "Social Technique, Social Status, and Social Change in Illness," in C. Kluckhohn and H. A. Murray (eds.), Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture, Knopf, New York, 1953, pp. 130-131; cited by Seymour Rubenfeld, "Family of Outcasts: Psychocultural Contributions Toward General Theory of Delinquency Causation" (mimeographed, in preparation for a book on delinquency by Donald Cook and Seymour Rubenfeld), p. 130.

21. Rubenfeld, ibid.

22. Daniel R. Miller and Guy E. Swanson, The Changing American Parent, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, 1958, p. 157.

23. Philip Hauser, "Rapid Growth: Key to Understanding Metropolitan Problems," an address to the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, May 5, 1961.

24. Riesman, op. cit., pp. 184-5.

25. Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899), Modern Library Edition, pp. 344-5, cited by Riesman, ibid.

26. Elizabeth G. Herzog and Hylan Lewis, "Priorities in Research on Unmarried Mothers," in Research Perspectives on the Unmarried Mother, Child Welfare League of America, Inc., New York, 1962, p. 36.

27. Ibid., p. 34.

28. Kroeber, op. cit., p. 272.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Our data collection was guided by a definition of low income. The income ceiling was based on the minimum comfort workingman's budget for a family of four in Washington, D.C. All of the low income families included in the study population would undoubtedly be placed in the lower class by any of the objective criteria currently used.

32. Oscar Lewis, "Personality Characteristics -- Discussion" in F. L. K. Hsu, Aspects of Culture and Personality: A Symposium, Abelard-Schuman, Inc., New York, 1954, p. 38.

33. Although the raw data are qualitative, statistical as well as non-statistical techniques are being used in the analysis. The raw materials are being taken through two separate but complementary sequences of analysis. The family ratings of 39 selected families -- selected because of the completeness of the field reports and the number of contacts -- were made with a form and criteria that were developed after a great deal of the field work had been done. The information was not gathered with ratings in mind. Analysis represents an attempt to combine case analysis and quantitative methods.

34. A public institution for the emergency care of neglected and dependent children.

35. Hyman Rodman's notion of "the lower class value stretch" is relevant here: Hyman Rodman, "The Lower Class Value Stretch," revision of a paper read at the annual meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society, April 1961 (mimeographed); to be published in a forthcoming issue of Social Forces. See also Elizabeth Herzog, Unmarried Mothers: Some Questions to be Answered and Some Answers to be Questioned," presented at the Eastern Regional Conference, Child Welfare League of America, Baltimore, Maryland, March 1, 1962.

36. Hylan Lewis, "Child-Rearing Practices Among Low-Income Families," in Case Work Papers, 1961: From the National Conference on Social Welfare, Family Service Association of America, New York, 1961, pp. 79-92; also Lewis, "Child Rearing Among Low-Income Families," Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, Washington, D.C., 1961; and Elizabeth H. Ross, "Comments on 'Child Rearing Practices Among Low Income Families in the District of Columbia,' a paper presented before the National Conference on Social Welfare, Minneapolis, May 16, 1961..." (mimeographed).

37. W. M. Miller, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

38. Richard Slobodin, "'Upton Square': A Field Report and Commentary," Child Rearing Study, Health and Welfare Council of the National Capital Area, 1960, p. 13 (mimeographed); cited in H. Lewis, op. cit.

39. C. C. Hughes, et al, People of Core and Woodlot: Vol. 2, The Sterling County Study of Psychiatric Disorder and Sociocultural Environment, Basic Books, New York, 1960, pp. 394-395; cited by Rubenfeld, op. cit., p. 118.